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Vital health care services restored in budget

LANSING – The state Senate has completed its work on the fiscal year 2005-06 budget, without cutting important health services for Michigan’s residents, announced Sen. Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance.

“My colleagues and I have approved a budget that reflects fiscal responsibility,” Hammerstrom said. “Michigan’s families can be confident that we have listened to their concerns and worked to keep their priorities our goal.”

Among the key budget issues the Legislature faced was healthcare. The Legislature restored funding for certain Medicaid programs such as adult dental coverage, and hearing and vision screening services. As Chair of the Senate Health Policy Committee, Hammerstrom recognized the importance of these programs.

“Although we needed to look for ways to reduce the state’s spending, cutting dental coverage for adults who receive Medicaid wasn’t the answer,” Hammerstrom said. “Studies have shown that poor dental hygiene often leads to other ailments. Encouraging people to take preventive measures in regard to their health will help in keeping future health care costs down.”

In addition, the Medicaid budget also included co-pays to encourage recipients to make healthy lifestyle choices.

“The cost of health care has increased greatly in recent years,” Hammerstrom said. “Taking the steps to live healthier now will help control and ultimately decrease the amount of money Michigan families spend on health care in the future.”

The budget also called for a bipartisan joint subcommittee to examine the efficiency of Medicaid services provided in the state. The subcommittee will look at ways to cut unnecessary costs including, but not limited to, additional means or methods of identifying and prohibiting Medicaid fraud and increasing Medicaid estate recovery.

(More)

Funding for early development programs in education was also a priority for Hammerstrom. The Senate approved continued funding for Young Fives programs throughout the state at the current level.

“Early development is essential in ensuring children’s success in school,” Hammerstrom said. “As a parent and former teacher, I recognize the value of Young Fives and other pre-school programs.”

The budgets are expected to be signed by the governor prior to the start of the new fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

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